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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/975,444	10/11/2001	Ching-Te Lin	TI-31518	9172

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EXAMINER	
PHAM, LONG	

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2814	

DATE MAILED: 12/26/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/975,444	LIN ET AL.	
	Examin r	Art Unit	MW
	Long Pham	2814	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _____.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) 12-22 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) 12-22 is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

13)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

14)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ .
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: .

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 12-22 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

2. Claims 12, 13, 14, 15, and16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the applicant's admitted prior art (AAPA) of this application in view of Iacoponi et al. (US '754).

AAPA teaches a method of fabricating an integrated circuit, comprising the steps of (see figure 1 and the background of the Invention on pages 1 and 2):

forming a dielectric layer over a semiconductor body;

forming a trench 12 in a first part of said dielectric layer;

depositing a liner/barrier material14 over said dielectric layer including said trench using physical vapor deposition;

depositing a seed layer 16 over said liner/barrier layer; and

depositing a copper layer over said seed layer.

AAPA fails to teach that the overhang portion is removed by sputter etch using a low bias after the liner/barrier layer and the seed layer are formed over the trench as recited in present claim 12.

Iacoponi et al. teach that an overhang at upper portion of a hole is removed by sputter etch after a layer comprised of a barrier layer and a seed layer are formed over the hole . See figure 2 and col. 4, line 40 to col. 6, line 60.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices to remove the overhang portion at the upper portion of the hole by sputter etch after the metal layer is formed over the hole in the method of AAPA because in doing so good sidewall step coverage and conformality are obtained. See col. 2, lines 45-50.

AAPA in view of Iacoponi et al. teaches performing the sputter etch after the barrier layer and the seed layer are formed but fails to teach performing the sputter etch before the seed layer is formed as recited in present claim 12.

However, It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices to perform the sputter etch before the seed layer is formed because the selection of any order of performing process steps is prima facie obvious in the absence of new or unexpected results. In re Burhans, 154 F.2d 690, 69 USPQ 330 (CCPA 1946).

AAPA further fails to teach that a via is formed in the dielectric layer as recited in present claim 12.

However, the formation of a via and a trench in a dielectric layer forming a interconnect pattern is well-known to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices.

With respect to claim 15, the use of Ti, TiN, Ta, or TaN is well-known to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices.

Iacoponi et al. teach that the overhang at upper portion of a hole is removed by sputter etch after the metal layer is formed but fail to teach that the sputter etching is done at low voltage or low bias or at a voltage of 0 to −300 volts as recited in present claim 16.

However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices to determine the workable or optimal range for the sputtering bias or voltage through routine experimentation and optimization to obtain optimal or desired device performance because the sputtering bias or voltage is a result-effective variable and there is no evidence indicating that the sputtering bias or voltage is critical or produces any unexpected results and it has been held that it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges of a result-effective variable within given prior art conditions by routine experimentation. See MPEP 2144.05.

1. Claims 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the applicant's admitted prior art (AAPA) of this application in view of Iacoponi et al. (US '754).

AAPA teaches a method of fabricating an integrated circuit, comprising the steps of (see figure 1 and the background of the Invention on pages 1 and 2):

forming a pre-metal dielectric (PMD) layer over a semiconductor body;

forming a contact hole in said PMD layer;

depositing a liner layer over said PMD layer including in said contact hole using physical vapor deposition, wherein said liner layer has an overhang portion at a top of said contact hole;

depositing a barrier layer over said liner layer; and

depositing a metal filler of tungsten or CVD Ti to fill said contact hole.

AAPA fails to teach that the overhang portion is removed by sputter etch using a low bias after the liner layer and the barrier layer are formed over the trench as recited in present claim 18.

Iacoponi et al. teach that an overhang at upper portion of a hole is removed by sputter etch after a layer comprised of a barrier layer and a seed layer are formed over the hole . See figure 2 and col. 4, line 40 to col. 6, line 60.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices to remove the overhang portion at the upper portion of the hole by sputter etch after the metal layer is formed over the hole in the method of AAPA because in doing so good sidewall step coverage and conformality are obtained. See col. 2, lines 45-50.

AAPA in view of Iacoponi et al. teaches performing the sputter etch after the barrier layer and the seed layer are formed but fails to teach performing the sputter etch before the seed layer is formed as recited in present claim 17.

However, It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices to perform the sputter etch before the seed layer is formed because the selection of any order of performing process steps is prima facie obvious in the absence of new or unexpected results. In re Burhans, 154 F.2d 690, 69 USPQ 330 (CCPA 1946).

With respect to claim 21, the use of Ti as liner layer and TiN as barrier layer are well-known to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices.

Iacoponi et al. teach that the overhang at upper portion of a hole is removed by sputter etch after the metal layer is formed but fail to teach that the sputter etching is done at low voltage or low bias or at a voltage of 0 to −300 volts as recited in present claim 22.

However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of making semiconductor devices to determine the workable or optimal range for the sputtering bias or voltage through routine experimentation and optimization to obtain optimal or desired device performance because the sputtering bias or voltage is a result-effective variable and there is no evidence indicating that the sputtering bias or voltage is critical or produces any unexpected results and it has been held that it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges of a result-effective variable within given prior art conditions by routine experimentation. See MPEP 2144.05.

Conclusion

2. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory

action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Long Pham whose telephone number is 703-308-1092. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8:30AM-5:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Wael Fahmy can be reached on 703-308-4918. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-746-4082.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0956.

Long Pham
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2814

LP